

No panic buying on this side of the Causeway

JOHOR BARU: Shops in Johor have yet to see their goods flying off the shelves despite reports of panic buying in Singapore recently.

A check at several retail outlets here showed no indication of panic buying, either by Malaysians or foreigners.

An employee at a retail outlet in a popular mall, who only wanted to be known as Nurliana, 34, said she had not seen any "extreme buying".

"It is normal for Singaporeans to shop here, but we did not see anything out of the ordinary last weekend. We still have ample stock except for face masks and hand sanitisers," she said.

Sundry shop owner Koo Siew Lan, 45, echoed the sentiment, adding that sales had actually been declining since the Covid-19 (novel coronavirus) outbreak.

"I did not see anyone buying in large quantities in the past few days, but sales have been slow over the past few weeks as people seem to be going out less," she said.

Singaporean businessman Eddy Tay, 35, was surprised that Johor still had stock for the things he wanted.

"I do not usually buy things in Johor but with the current trend in Singapore, I gave it a try.

"I am glad that I can get my groceries here without having to search far and wide," he said while shopping at a supermarket here.

In a statement, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry said checks had been conducted in Johor Baru, Iskandar Puteri, Pasir Gudang and Kulai since Saturday to prevent panic buying.



Stocking up: Tay decided to try grocery shopping in Johor due to the current trend of panic buying in Singapore.

The ministry's Johor director Mohd Hairul Anuar Bohro said 604 premises were inspected in a two-day operation.

"Some 60 enforcement officers conducted the checks at popular shopping locations among Singaporeans here. We found that goods such as food and other basic necessities were sufficient and easy to obtain," he said.

He added that the purpose of the inspection was to ensure that sup-

ply of essential goods was adequate and that there was no hoarding or profiteering.

"The supply of controlled goods such as sugar, cooking oil and flour at the wholesale and retail levels is also adequate at the moment," he said, urging the public to report any unreasonable price hike or insufficient supply to the ministry.

Panic buying of essential items was seen in Singapore after the island republic moved its Covid-19

alert to Code Orange last Friday.

Under the Disease Outbreak Response System Condition, Code Orange means that the outbreak is deemed to have moderate to high public health impact.

What Malaysians are complaining about is that face masks and hand sanitisers are running short across the country.

Mohd Helmy Ishak, a marketing executive from Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya, said most pharmacies were out of stock for the two items.

"I finally found them at a small pharmacy in Taman Tun Dr Ismail. But they placed a purchase limit on customers," said the 29-year-old, adding that customers could only buy one pack of face masks per person and three small bottles of sanitisers.

Advertising executive Tan Chu Mei said most pharmacies in Damansara had run out of stock.

"I visited three pharmacies and none of them had stock. Finally, I found a small pharmacy that was selling a pack of face masks at RM10," she said.

Freelance writer Emma said she had bought more hand sanitisers recently because her job required her to be outdoors.

"Maybe I'm a bit paranoid, but I am certainly worried about getting infected," she said.

Meanwhile, a business management executive said she was thankful she had stockpiled the items "several years back".

"Thanks to the paranoid side of me, I bought face masks and hand sanitisers in bulk then," she said.